



Office of the Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 24, 1997

**STATEMENT BY HOUSE SPEAKER NEWT GINGRICH
REGARDING PROPOSED RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AMENDMENT**

I am pleased that we are moving forward on the proposed Religious Freedom Amendment. It is increasingly vital that we preserve not only voluntary school prayer, but also other precious religious liberties which have been eroded by our courts.

Our nation was founded on a unique understanding, proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence. Not only do we possess certain unalienable rights, but they come to us from our Creator, not government. Government has been entrusted by the American people to preserve these God-given rights. When our courts have restricted these rights in connection with religion then we must act to re-establish and secure these fundamental rights once again. That is what the Religious Freedom Amendment does. Congressman Istook is to be commended for beginning this debate, which promises to be a very healthy and much needed one.

I am pleased to support this effort. The legislative process will certainly provide every opportunity for thoughtful review and understanding, so that the best possible language is ultimately approved and adopted.